



Chapter Six

Devotees of the Lord

The Three Classes of Devotees

Devotees may be divided into three classes. The devotee in the first or uppermost class is described as follows. He is very expert in the study of relevant scriptures, and he is also expert in putting forward arguments in terms of those scriptures. He can very nicely present conclusions with perfect discretion and can consider the ways of devotional service in a decisive way. He understands perfectly that the ultimate goal of life is to attain to the transcendental loving service of Krishna, and he knows that Krishna is the only object of worship and love.

This first-class devotee is one who has strictly followed the rules and regulations under the training of a bona fide spiritual master and has sincerely obeyed him in accord with revealed scriptures. Thus, being fully trained to preach and become a spiritual master himself, he is considered first class. The first-class devotee never deviates from the principles of higher authority, and he attains firm faith in the scriptures by understanding with all reason and arguments.

When we speak of arguments and reason, it means arguments and reason on the basis of revealed scriptures. The first-class devotee is not interested in dry speculative methods meant for wasting time. In other words, one who has attained a mature determination in the matter of devotional service can be accepted as the first-class devotee.

The second-class devotee has been defined by the following symptoms: he is not very expert in arguing on the strength of revealed scripture, but he has firm faith in the objective.

The purport of this description is that the second-class devotee has firm faith in the procedure of devotional service unto Krishna, but he may sometimes fail to offer arguments and decisions on the strength of revealed scripture to an opposing party. But at the same time he is still undaunted within himself as to his decision that Krishna is the supreme object of worship.

The neophyte or third-class devotee is one whose faith is not strong and who, at the same time, does not recognize the decision of the revealed scripture. The neophyte's faith can be changed by someone else with strong arguments or by an opposite decision.

Unlike the second-class devotee, who also cannot put forward arguments and evidences from the scripture, but who still has all faith in the objective, the neophyte has no firm faith in the



objective. Thus he is called the neophyte devotee.

(Nectar of Devotion, pp. 29-30)

The Twenty-Six Qualities of a Devotee

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "Devotees are always merciful, humble, truthful, equal to all, faultless, magnanimous, mild and clean. They are without material possessions, and they perform welfare work for everyone. They are peaceful, surrendered to Krishna and desireless. They are indifferent to material acquisitions and are fixed in devotional service. They completely control the six bad qualities -- lust, anger, greed and so forth. They eat only as much as required, and they are not inebriated. They are respectful, grave, compassionate and without false prestige. They are friendly, poetic, expert and silent. (Cc. Madhya 22.78-81)

1. Merciful

A devotee is merciful because he is the well-wisher of all living entities. He is not only a well-wisher of human society, but a well-wisher of the animal society as well. He treats all living entities in such a way that they can ultimately get salvation from this material entanglement.

2. Humble

Humility means that one should not be anxious to have the satisfaction of being honored by others. Humility is not an artificial thing. It's a deep, honest, and it comes when a conditioned soul sees his failure and unpretentiously begs Krishna for forgiveness and engagement in devotional service.

3. Truthful

The first truthfulness of a disciple is to keep his promise to avoid sinful acts and always chant sixteen rounds of japa on his beads every day. Nor should a devotee engage in illegal activities. But we must be truthful in the ultimate sense, acting not for our own interests, but for Krishna's interests.

4. Equal for everyone

A devotee sees the spirit soul and Supersoul in the heart of every living entity. He treats all living entities according to their different positions in whichever way is best for their spiritual advancement.

5. Faultless

A devotee who is surrendered in body, mind and words to Krishna and is always executing Krishna's will to the best of his ability is considered faultless.

6. Magnanimous

A devotee is magnanimous because he knows that love of Krishna is the greatest of all things and he goes on distributing it without self motivation, without disappointment and without



being checked. Thus his magnanimity knows no bounds and the good fortune of those who receive this gift is unparalleled.

7. Mild

The devotee avoids the chase after illusory material happiness and its resultant suffering. He remains peaceful because he is satisfied in Krishna consciousness. That mildness comes not from timidity but from self-satisfaction. Like the great ocean, he is pacific. Other gets agitated and rant over worldly happenings, personal frustrations, and misgivings, but the devotee depends upon Krishna and tries to carry out the Lord's order.

8. Clean

The Krishna consciousness movement is dedicated to making the world 'revolutionary clean' through hygienic principles and even more importantly, by cleansing the heart with the chanting of the Hare Krishna maha-mantra.

9. Without material possessions

The highest realization is to see everything as Krishna's. The daring, inspired, and compassionate devotee, however, is not satisfied simply to see that it belongs to Krishna, but he works to use all things in the service of the Lord- so that the whole world can benefit, in such a spiritualized world society, all the citizens would receive the blessing of Krishna, become peaceful and prosperous and after this life go back to home, back to Godhead.

10. He performs welfare work for everyone

The devotee can perform welfare work for everyone because Krishna consciousness applies to all humanity and all species. It is not only for a certain race, nationality, or sex; it is for all living entities.

11. Peaceful

"Peaceful does not refer to a physically idyllic setting that may in fact be shattered at any moment. Peaceful is the condition of the soul at peace with Krishna, and it is possible for the devotee who sees Krishna in everything. "Realization that there is no existence besides Krishna is the platform of peace and fearlessness."

12. Surrendered to Krishna

Surrender is not whimsical but authorized and scientific. If we practice, we will learn how to surrender. A devotee engaged in a life of full surrender to Krishna has many things to do and does not waste a moment. His goal is to completely surrender to Krishna so that he can be rid of all material desires and serve Krishna more and more.

13. Desireless

On attaining full devotional service a devotee finds that all his desires have become satisfied by complete engagement in Krishna consciousness. He has no more material desires, just desires to serve the spiritual master and Krishna.



14. Indifferent to material acquisitions

A devotee may use material things in the service of Krishna, but he does not become attached or dependent on them. He may serve Krishna with millions of dollars, construct buildings and profusely publish Krishna conscious literature; but even if he has nothing material to use, he can serve Krishna just by chanting Hare Krishna.

15. Fixed

A devotee's realizations of Krishna should be so deep that no allurements, distress or contradictory philosophy can sway his determination to execute the order of guru and Krishna.

16. Completely controls the six bad qualities

The six bad qualities are lust, anger, greed, illusion, madness, and envy. A pure devotee controls these qualities by full engagement in the service of Krishna. Control of the senses is possible not by dry restraint or mechanical repression but by transcendental knowledge and transcendental taste.

17. Eats only as much as necessary

Bhagavad-gita sets the standard of eating for the bhakti-yogi: 'One should not eat too much or too little.' What does it mean, to eat enough and not too much? It is an individual matter, according to the constitution of one's body. An individual can honestly sense when he has eaten enough for health and nourishment. 'Eat what you can easily digest.'

18. Is without inebriation

He is not lopsided or intoxicated by material pleasure. He reduces his material needs to a simple level and patiently dedicates his life to the service of Krishna. His life is therefore the real example of moderation, balance and sanity.

19. Respectful

The devotee offers respect to others without expecting any respect in return. He respects that all living beings have been given life by Krishna, and he knows that he has no right to take it away.

20. Without false prestige

False prestige can be considered in two ways:

- a. The objects of prestige are falsely prestigious; and
- b. Our claim to any prestigious object or position is false. A devotee is free from both kinds of false prestige. He is not attracted to the glitter of desirable material possessions, and whatever is attractive he acknowledges as but the reflection of Krishna, the all-attractive cause of all causes.



21. **Grave**

There are many light moments in Krishna consciousness, but for the conditioned soul to give up his material life and prepare himself to go back to Godhead is no joke. It is a very deep purpose. Gravity means to be always thinking of Krishna and the ultimate goal of life.

22. **Compassionate**

The essence of compassion is preaching. But the force that drives preaching is purity. Preaching rests on the sincere, pure hearts of the devotees.

23. **Friendly**

A devotee is friend because he directs you to Krishna. Krishna is the best friend of all living entities.

24. **Poetic**

Regardless of whether or not he writes poetry, the devotee has the perception of a poet, because he sees in every object and every activity the supreme beauty of Krishna's transcendental form and pastimes.

25. **Expert**

A devotee is expert. This means that he is willing to do anything. The best expertise of the devotee is sincere surrender.

26. **Silent**

Silent does not mean that one should not speak; silent means that one should not speak nonsense. One should speak only of essentials, and the most essential speech for the devotee is to speak for the sake of the Supreme Lord.

The Importance of Devotee Association

In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.

PURPORT

The process of advancing in Krishna consciousness and devotional service is described here. The first point is that one must seek the association of persons who are Krishna conscious and who engage in devotional service. Without such association one cannot make advancement.

Simply by theoretical knowledge or study one cannot make any appreciable advancement. One



must give up the association of materialistic persons and seek the association of devotees because without the association of devotees one cannot understand the activities of the Lord. Generally, people are convinced of the impersonal feature of the Absolute Truth.

Because they do not associate with devotees, they cannot understand that the Absolute Truth can be a person and have personal activities. This is a very difficult subject matter, and unless one has personal understanding of the Absolute Truth, there is no meaning to devotion. Service or devotion cannot be offered to anything impersonal. Service must be offered to a person.

Nondevotees cannot appreciate Krishna consciousness by reading the Srimad-Bhagavatam or any other Vedic literature wherein the activities of the Lord are described; they think that these activities are fictional, manufactured stories because spiritual life is not explained to them in the proper mood. To understand the personal activities of the Lord, one has to seek the association of devotees, and by such association, when one contemplates and tries to understand the transcendental activities of the Lord, the path to liberation is open, and he is freed.

One who has firm faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead becomes fixed, and his attraction for association with the Lord and the devotees increases. Association with devotees means association with the Lord. The devotee who makes this association develops the consciousness for rendering service to the Lord, and then, being situated in the transcendental position of devotional service, he gradually becomes perfect. (SB 3.25.25)

Lord Caitanya was once asked by a householder, "What is the behavior of a devotee?" Lord Caitanya replied that a devotee never makes friendships or intimately mixes with nondevotees, but strictly avoids their association. He also said that it is better for a devotee to live in a cage of fire than to live with nondevotees, and better to embrace an alligator than a worshiper of the demigods.

Srila Prabhupada said that most of our advancement is made as a result of our association with devotees, and that we must always keep this association, even though we may at times find it difficult. Since we will reflect the qualities of our associates, we will take on the qualities of nondevotees if we associate with them. It is said that a devotee has all the good qualities of the demigods, but a nondevotee cannot have any good qualities because at best he is only acting on the mental platform, and is sure to fall.

Nine Characteristics of One in Ecstatic Love

"'When the seed of ecstatic emotion for Krishna fructifies, the following nine symptoms manifest in one' s behavior: forgiveness, concern that time should not be wasted, detachment, absence of false prestige, hope, eagerness, a taste for chanting the holy name of the Lord, attachment to descriptions of the transcendental qualities of the Lord, and affection for those places where the Lord resides -- that is, a temple or a holy place like Vrndavana. These are all called anubhava, subordinate signs of ecstatic emotion. They are visible in a person in whose



heart the seed of love of God has begun to fructify.'

(1) Anxious to use his time in the service of the Lord.

An unalloyed devotee who has developed ecstatic love for Krishna is always engaging his words in reciting prayers to the Lord. Within the mind he is always thinking of Krishna, and with his body he either offers obeissances by bowing down before the Deity or engages in some other service. During these ecstatic activities he sometimes sheds tears. In this way his whole life is engaged in the service of the Lord, with not a moment wasted on any other engagement.

(2) Forgiving and perseverant.

When a person is undisturbed even in the presence of various causes of disturbance, he is called reserved and perseverant. An example of this perseverance and reservation is found in the behavior of King Pariksit, as described in the First Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam. The King says there to all the sages present before him at the time of his death, "My dear brahmanas, you should always accept me as your surrendered servant. I have come to the bank of the Ganges just to devote my heart and soul unto the lotus feet of Lord Krishna. So please bless me, that mother Ganges may also be pleased with me. Let the curse of the brahmana' s son fall upon me - I do not mind. I only request that at the last moment of my life all of you will kindly chant the holy name of Vishnu, so that I may realize His transcendental qualities."

(3) Detached from all material attraction.

The senses are always desiring sense enjoyment, but when a devotee develops transcendental love for Krishna his senses are no longer attracted by material desires. This is detachment. There is a nice example of this detachment in connection with the character of King Bharata. In the Fifth Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam: "Emperor Bharata was so attracted by the beauty of the lotus feet of Krishna that even in his youthful life he gave up all kinds of attachments to family, children, friends, kingdom, etc., as though they were untouchable stools."

(4) Without false prestige.

When a devotee, in spite of possessing all the qualities of pure realization, is not proud of his position, he is called prideless. In the Padma Purana it is stated that King Bhagiratha was the emperor above all other kings, yet he developed such ecstatic love for Krishna that he became a mendicant and went out begging even to the homes of his political enemies and untouchables. He was so humble that he respectfully bowed down before them.



(5) Great hope.

The strong conviction that one will certainly receive the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is called in Sanskrit asa-bandha. Asa-bandha means to continue to think, "Because I'm trying my best to follow the routine principles of devotional service, I am sure that I will go back to Godhead, back to home."

(6) Always eager to serve the Lord.

In order to achieve success in devotional service one must have complete eagerness which is called samutkantha. This eagerness is the price for achieving success in Krishna consciousness. It is stated in the Vedic literature that to purchase the most valuable thing, Krishna consciousness, one has to develop intense eagerness for achieving success.

(7) Attached to the chanting of the holy names.

In the Krishna-karnamrta there is another statement, about the chanting of Radharani. It is said by one of the associates of Radharani, "O Lord Govinda, the girl who is the daughter of King Vrsabhanu is now shedding tears, and She is anxiously chanting Your holy name -- 'Krishna! Krishna!'"

(8) Eager to describe the transcendental qualities of the Lord.

Attachment for chanting the glories of the Lord is also expressed in the Krishna-karnamrta as follows: "What shall I do for Krishna, who is pleasing beyond all pleasurable conceptions, and who is naughtier than all restless boys? The idea of Krishna's beautiful activities is attracting my heart, and I do not know what I can do!"

(9) Pleased to live in a holy place.

A pure devotee of Lord Krishna resides in the district of Mathura or Vrndavana and visits all the places where Krishna's pastimes were performed. This fills him with transcendental pleasure and feelings of separation from Krishna. Living in a temple is also living in a holy place.

(Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.3.25-26)